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SOUTHEAST ASIA
A SPECIAL REPORT

The Unreasonable Question

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~~The virgin issue in our Vietnam policy is the moral one. The Lilliputian~~ measures of public dissent have been couched in supremely practical terms: How are we going about the war? Should we be escalating or negotiating? Are our policies efficient? Are we winning?

These are reasonable questions, asked by reasonable men. The unreasonable question—the seemingly unutterable question is—*why?*

But this is the essential query. It is what must be asked before any rational discussion of policy alternatives is possible. It is the question RAMPARTS asks in this special issue on the moral disaster of our Southeast Asia policy.

Why is the public told America was asked to step into Vietnam, when our initial involvement was actually installing, financing and arming a despotic and unpopular premier as a "democratic alternative" to the overwhelming grass-roots popularity of the Communist guerillas? (P. 16)

Why do people still believe that Southeast Asia is ready to fall, country-by-country, like dominos into the Communist axis, when Asian nations are in reality complex, perverse and independent—like Cambodia where a King can feel comfortable as a Socialist and an anti-Communist at the same time? (PP. 25 and 34)

Why do serious, concrete, non-Establishment proposals for peace (P. 41) stand so little chance of being heard and understood by American policy makers?

Why—and this is the most disturbing question of all—why is there no significant number of Americans asking these questions? Is the age of consensus that complete? Or have we lost all capacity for moral outrage?

The Cold War and its hot complexes are no longer as simple-minded as they appeared in the late 1940s. This is a post-Vandenberg era: foreign policy should be *debatable*. Indeed, it must be debated if this country is to rid itself of the clumsy, generous, para-missionary, quasi-gangbusters crazyquilt of little reality that has covered our bipartisan foreign policy through four administrations.

There can be no better place to begin such a debate than over our Southeast Asia policy. We know it doesn't work. Let us ask *why*.

—The Editors.